

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 10053 261835Z

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INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL KARACHI

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AMCONSUL MADRAS

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SUBJ: CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION

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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 NEW DE 10053 261835Z

SUMMARY: A PROMINENT GUJARAT CONGRESS MP INFORMS THAT

THE OPPOSITION-SPONSORED ANTI-EMERGENCY DEMONSTRATIONS PLANNED IN GUJARAT ON JULY 26 COULD PRESENT SECURITY PROBLEMS. PARLIAMENT CONTINUES TO SIT DESPITE THE OPPOSITION WALKOUT. CONGRESS MPS TELL US THAT PARLIAMENT WILL MEET FOR ONLY THREE (RATHER THAN 6-7) MONTHS ANNUALLY FOLLOWING A BRIEF WINTER SESSION LATER THIS YEAR. MRS GANDHI REPORTEDLY WILL SOON REDUCE THE SIZE OF HER PRESENT CABINET AS AN EXAMPLE TO OTHER STATE GOVERNMENTS. WE CONTINUE TO RECEIVE REPORTS THAT SANJAY GANDHI'S INFLUENCE IS STILL RIDING HIGH. THE CONGRESS HAS ACCEPTED CPI OVERTURES TO COOPERATE IN MANIPUR AND WEST BENGAL. A PROMINENT CONGRESS MP RELATED TO A SUPREME COURT JUSTICE SAYS THAT THE SUPREME COURT HEARING ON MRS GANDHI'S CASE "WILL NOT LAST MORE THAN SIX WEEKS." END SUMMARY.

1. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, THE SECURITY SITUATION AROUND THE COUNTRY REMAINS PEACEFUL. A PROMINENT GUJARAT CONGRESS MP WHO IS A MEMBER OF THE CONGRESS PARLIAMENTARY PARTY EXECUTIVE TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT THE OPPOSITION-SPONSORED ANTI-EMERGENCY DEMONSTRATIONS PLANNED IN GUJARAT ON JULY 26 COULD PRESENT SECURITY PROBLEMS. (SEE NEW DELHI 9777) HE SAID THAT CONGRESSMEN IN THE STATE ARE WORRIED ABOUT THEIR OWN PERSONAL SECURITY, AND THAT HE ALONG WITH ONE OTHER GUJARAT MP HAS PERSONALLY ASKED THE UNION MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS TO GUARANTEE THEM PROTECTION IN GUJARAT.

2. PARLIAMENT CONTINUES TO SIT DESPITE THE OPPOSITION WALKOUT. A SPRINKLING OF CPI, ADMK, MUSLIM LEAGUE, AND INDEPENDENT MPS REMAIN BEHIND WITH THE LARGE CONGRESS MAJORITIES IN BOTH HOUSES. THE SESSION HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO JULY 31 AND WILL BE CONCERNED WITH ROUTINELY PASSING THE GOI ORDINANCES AND OTHER PENDING BILLS LISTED IN EARLIER MESSAGES. THERE ARE RUMORS SOME OF THE MPS WHO WALKED OUT WILL BE ARRESTED IN NEXT FEW DAYS.

3. CONGRESS MPS TELL US THE PARLIAMENTARY WINTER SESSION WILL COMMENCE IN OCTOBER OR NOVEMBER AS IN CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 NEW DE 10053 261835Z

PREVIOUS YEARS. THEREAFTER, PARLIAMENT WILL MEET

FOR ONLY THREE (RATHER THAN 6-7) MONTHS ANNUALLY. THEY SAY THAT PLANS ARE BEING FORGED TO STRENGTHEN THE WEAK COMMITTEE SYSTEM IN PARLIAMENT TO MAKE UP FOR THE LOSS OF SITTING TIME. (WE'RE NOT SURE HOW THIS WILL WORK, OR INDEED GIVEN THE DIMINISHED STATURE OF PARLIAMENT, HOW SIGNIFICANT THE WORK OF

THE COMMITTEES WILL BE.)

4. TALK OF A CABINET RESHUFFLE AFTER THE PRESENT PARLIAMENTARY SESSION IS STILL IN THE WIND. REASON: MRS GANDHI WANTS TO SET AN EXAMPLE FOR THE STATE GOVERNMENTS WHO HAVE BEEN URGED TO REDUCE THE SIZE OF THEIR CABINETS. WE ANTICIPATE THAT THE RESHUFFLE WILL NOT INCLUDE ANY DRAMATIC CHANGES, FOR EXAMPLE, WEST BENGAL CM RAY WILL NOW PROBABLY NOT COME TO THE CENTER, AND CONGRESS PRESIDENT BAROOAH WILL NOT BE MOVED INTO THE CABINET.

5. A SOURCE CLOSE TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S INNER CIRCLE INFORMS THAT SANJAY GANDHI'S INFLUENCE IS STILL RIDING HIGH. HE IS EXERCISING "DE FACTO" CONTROL OVER THE DELHI ADMINISTRATION AND DELHI CONGRESS ORGANIZATION. ANOTHER SOURCE REALTED TO SANJAY BY MARRIAGE INFORMS THAT HE CONTINUES TO ISSUE ORDERS TO HIGH RANKING BUREAUCRATS IN THE GOI AND THAT CABINET MINISTERS SEE HIM REGULARLY.

6. CONGRESS HAS ACCEPTED CPI OVERTURES TO COOPERATE IN MANIPUR AND WEST BENGAL. IN MANIPUR THE CPI WILL BE BROUGHT INTO THE CABINET; IN WEST BENGAL THE TWO PARTIES WILL PURSUE A "JOINT ACTION" PROGRAM. THE CONGRESS ENJOYS SECURE MAJORITIES IN BOTH STATES AND NEED NOT WORRY ABOUT THE CPI ASSOCIATION. MRS GANDHI HAS PROBABLY PERSONALLY APPROVED THE COLLABORATION BECAUSE OF THIS. (SHE HAS HELD OFF IN OTHER STATES WHERE THE CONGRESS MAJORITY IS THINNER FROM

THE CENTER'S PERSPECTIVE, CONGREFC-CPI COOPERATION SERVES TO PRESERVE THE SPLIT WITHIN THE COMMUNIST CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 NEW DE 10053 261835Z

MOVEMENT, STRENGTHEN THE CONGRESS' "PROGRESSIVE" IMAGE, AND PROVIDE MORE DEDICATED CADRE. EFFORTS TO INSTITUTIONALIZE COOPERATION ALSO CONSTITUTES A "GOOD WILL" GESTURE TO MOSCOW.

7. A PROMINENT CONGRESS MP RELATED TO A SUPREME COURT JUSTICE TELLS US THAT THE SUPREME COURT HEARPG ON MRS GANDHI'S CASE SCHEDULED TO COMMENCE AUGUST 11 "WILL NOT LAST MORE THAN SIX WEEKS." (COMMENT: THIS IS SHORT BY INDIAN STANDARDS.)

8. AJIT BHATTACHARJEE AND KULDIP NAYAR, TWO OF INDIA'S LEADING NEWSPAPERMEN AND POLITICAL COMMENTATORS, HAVE BEEN ARRESTED. WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO PIN DOWN THE EXACT REASONS. BOTH HAVE BEEN CRITICAL

OF MRS GANDHI AND SUPPORTIVE OF J.P. NARAYAN OVER
THE PAST YEAR. BHATTARCHARJEE IS EDITOR OF THE PRO-
J.P. EVERYMAN.

NAYAR, NEWS EDITOR OF THE INDIAN EXPRESS, WROTE A
BOOK INDIA AFTER NEHRU, PUBLISHED EARLIER THIS YEAR,
WHICH ATTACKED MRS GANDHI'S CREEPING AUTHORITARIANISM
SINCE 1969 AS AN ANTITHESIS OF NEHRU'S LIBERALISM
IN THE FIRST TWO DECADES OF INDEPENDENCE. WE UNDER-
STAND NAYAR HAS RECENTLY WRITTEN SEVERAL PIECES FOR
THE LONDON TIMES AND THIS COULD ACCOUNT FOR HIS
DETENTION.
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